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ABSTRACT

In order to promote multi-cultural literacy among its students, Delaware County Community College (DCCC) developed a multi-cultural sequence of humanities electives. The sequence emerged as a response to the predominantly White student body's lack of knowledge or curiosity about other cultures. The first of the four courses in the sequence is entitled "Women in Literature," a team-taught course focusing on the works of women authors from four American ethnic groups: African Americans, Native Americans, Chicanas, and Asian Americans. The second course, entitled "Literature: The Minority View," focuses on the literature of a different cultural group during each of three semesters, beginning with Black authors in America, followed by Asian American and and Central/South American literature. The remaining two courses were deliberately designed to broaden students' cultural perspective. "Myths of Our Western Culture" uses literature, film, music, dance, and visual art to explore cultural myths and their changing relevance to society. The final course in the sequence, currently under development, will explore the social, cultural, economic, and political contributions of Hispanic peoples. DCCC intends to supplement this four-course sequence with interdisciplinary courses and a variety of extracurricular cultural activities, such as clubs and ethnic food festivals. Bibliographies for each of the four courses are attached. (JMC)

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A MULTICULTURAL SEQUENCE OF HUMANITIES ELECTIVES

by Dr. Gwendolyn Anderson & Dr. Dessa Ewing

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Delaware County Community College

Paper presented at the National Conference of the

Community College Humanities Association

November 9-11, 1989

Washington, D. C.

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Multicultural Literacy
Session 7

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Delaware County Community College, PA

A Multicultural Sequence of Humanities Electives

If there is a commitment on the part of the college to promote the development of multi-cultural literacy among its students, what are some ways that this might be done? For four of us at Delaware County Community College, this meant a first step of getting together informally, talking, taking a look at what we were teaching or would be offering, and doing it. So, our group, consisting of Professors Dessa Ewing, George Spillane, Gerry Fisher, and Gwen Anderson, did just that. First we looked at our population. Delaware County Community College is a suburban community college located approximately 20 miles outside of Philadelphia. The student population, as of September, 1989, is roughly as follows:

89.7%	Caucasian
5.0%	African Americans
4.0%	**Other:** Greek, French, Afghan, Egyptian, Liberian, Ethiopian, Native of Sierra Leone
.8%	**Asian:** Japanese, Filipino, Chinese, Natives of Hong Kong, Taiwanese, Malaysian, Vietnamese, Kampuchean
.3%	**Hispanic:** Mexican, Puerto Rican, Venezuelan, Brazilian
.1%	Native American

Those of us who have direct contact with and responsibility for the non-native population observed that these students were eager to become familiar with the U.S. and its people and anxious to become part of the fabric. Our "home grown" population shows an appalling lack of knowledge about other cultures, exhibits very little curiosity about others, and seems totally unaware that their level of ignorance is so deep. Yet, our number of non-native students rises,

albeit incrementally, steadily. We felt that there was much to learn for all students in the area of multi-cultural understanding; everyone could benefit, but our American students needed to see the value of other cultures and to be sensitized to the validity of others.

In practice, there was no consistent offering of multi-cultural courses available to students, although "Women in Literature" and "Myths of Our Western Culture" had been offered in the past.

When I decided to offer "Women in Literature," this time I wanted it to be appealing and non-threatening. When it was first offered in 1984, it was feminist in theme. It was a team effort, taught by three professors. In its current incarnation, it is minority in theme. The base text is "The Third Woman: Minority Women Writers of the United States," edited by Dexter Fisher. Women writers from four groups are treated: African American, Native American, Chicana, and Asian American. It was considered important to focus on American writers because students were almost universally unaware of the literature of these minority groups who share the continent with them. Additionally, we share anecdotal experiences; we read articles, novels, short stories, and poems put on reserve in the Library; we attend off-campus programs having to do with women and their place in our society, and we view the perceptions of women through these writers' works as well as perceptions of women held by the cultures under study. We try to see the commonalty of experiences shared by the target group of writers. And, students look to their own ethnic groups and relate treatment/position of women to what they are shown through the "windows" created by the writers.

Our colleague, Professor George Spillane, developed a literature course "Literature: The Minority View." It is intended to revolve around three groups for the first three semesters. It is to be offered for African American, Asian American, and Central/South American literature. George began with "Black American Literature." This is a survey course which "traces the development of Black authors in America...and is a discussion of literary figures and thematic patterns which have distinguished the development of this unique literature."

In addition to Black Literature and Women in Literature, we have two other courses deliberately designed to broaden our students' cultural perspective. Those two courses are "Myths of our Western Culture," recently developed and now being taught for the second time, and "Hispanic Culture," now under development.

The Mythology course, listed as a humanities elective, uses literature, film, music, dance, and visual art to explore myths and their changing relevance to society. The primary readings of the course include Greek mythology and drama, Native American and African folk takes, "Romeo and Juliet," "Beowulf," and Mary Shelley's novel Frankenstein. The films used with the course include the uncut version of the 1931 "Frankenstein," the Zefferelli "Romeo and Juliet," a videotape of the Nuryev/Fonteyn/Fracci performance of Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet," Chaplin's "Modern Times," and selections from the TV series "The Power of Myth" with Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers. Videotapes are also available which present Greek and Roman Myths and the Greek epic in an accessible but not condescending format.

To introduce the students to music, we use a variety of selections ranging from the rock group Marillon's "Grendel" to the Tchaikovsky "Romeo and Juliet" overture, the Navajo Hoop Dance, Offenbach's "Orpheus in the Underworld" overture, Milhaud's jazz "Creation of the World," and excerpts from the Prokofiev ballet seen in class. Identification of these works is part of the final examination, so I provide tapes of them for the students to copy (using Learning Center facilities which copy foreign language tapes) and the students are able to copy and listen repeatedly to the music.

The literature is read and discussed in class, using much the same approach as in a literature class, but supplemented with the music and with slides appropriate to the subject. Discussion of Eros and Psyche necessarily precedes "Romeo and Juliet," and various artists' rendering of those famous lovers proves enlightening in a variety of ways. A guided tour of mythological subjects in the Philadelphia Museum of Art is also a required part of the course; students are given a packet containing a map of the museum with mythological items keyed to a list, commentary, and questions.

The Frankenstein novel and its variations in film are studied as a response to the question of what we will do about technology. Dedalus is seen as a progenitor of science and technology, and the students evaluate why Shelley subtitled her novel "The Modern Prometheus." Chaplin's "Modern Times" concludes the semester by showing man at the mercy of technology, overcoming only with love and sense of humor.

Our fourth course to be presented is the Hispanic Culture Course being developed by our colleague Professor Gerry Fisher. Her

starting point is that most community college students will not go on to study foreign literature in depth, but many will have an opportunity or need to communicate with Spanish speakers because of travel or business. She emphasizes in the foreign language courses the students' ability to use the language rather than to know about it. Since our student's own cultural reference point is often limited, an increasing awareness and appreciation of the target culture is stressed within the foreign language classroom.

In response to those limitations, Professor Fisher is currently developing a three-credit course that will explore the social, cultural, economic and political contributions of the Hispanic peoples. Offered in English, this humanities elective will support our efforts to expose our students to the intellectual and cultural differences beyond their immediate frame of reference and provide a global perspective. This course has obvious applicability both to those community college students leaving after two years to join the work force and to those who transfer to a four-year institution. Its value can be practical--to the business person who has international contacts--as well as cultural--to the community member who seeks enrichment.

With these four humanities electives, then--African American, Women in Literature, Mythology, and Hispanic culture--we are attempting to address the cultural limitations of our students. We are not entirely satisfied, however, that the offering of electives, and requiring certain courses of our graduates, sufficiently broadens our students.

Therefore, in addition to these courses, we are proposing the development of a series of truly interdisciplinary, one-credit

courses which address the needs and limitation of our particular student body. Further, we wish to coordinate the cultural enrichment of our students by a variety of activities such as a Conversation Club (particularly helpful for ESL students); an International Students' Club; an Ethnic Foods Festival; a variety of concerts on campus (ranging from Gospel to Native American to Irish harp); shows in the Art Gallery featuring Asian, Puerto Rican, and Native American artists.

In these ways, we hope to address the challenge set down by Lynne Cheney in 50 Hours and to broaden our own awareness, that of our colleagues, and that of our students. We hope the attached bibliography of these four courses will give other participants ideas for incorporation of diverse ethnic and cultural materials into courses. Even more, we hope to hear from you any good ideas we might incorporate into our program. We should all be educating the World Citizen. How can we plan and work together to that end?

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ENGLISH 292: "Women in Literature"

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MYTHS OF OUR WESTERN CULTURE
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The Greek Epic, Films for Humanities.
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Modern Times, dir. Charles Chaplin, 1936.

Music: Milhaud, "Creation du Monde"
Offenbach, "Orpheus in the Underworld" overture
Tchaikovsky, "Romeo and Juliet" overture
Prokofiev, "Romeo and Juliet" ballet

Myths of our Western Culture: Supplemental Reading (for papers and oral seminar presentation)

Creation and the Pantheon -
Jean Bolen, Goddesses in Everywoman: A New Psychology of Women -
for sci-fi buffs, James Varley's trilogy on Gaea, Titan, Wizard, and Demon
Milton's "Paradise Lost"
Gore Vidal, Creation

The Hero -
Homer, The Aeneid
Alice Walker, The Color Purple
The Lucas trilogy "Star Wars," "Empire Strikes Back," and "Return of the Jedi," with references in Campbell's The Power of Myth
John Gardner's Grendel
All the Coyote Tales
Anthony Powell, The Fisher King
One of the Sherlock Holmes novels, or a complete collection of the short stories; for female detectives, Glaspell's "Trifles"
Joseph Conrad's "The Secret Sharer" and Eric Higgs Doppelganger
Legends of King Arthur: Malory's Morte d'Arthur (available in modern translation)
John Steinbeck, The acts of King Arthur and his Noble Knights
Thomas Berger, Arthur Rex
Marion Zimmer Bradley, The Mists of Avalon
Sigurd Undset, Kristen Lavransdatter (any of the trilogy)
Toni Morrison's Beloved
Roger Abrahams, ed. African Folktales

Lovers and Parents -
Dashiell Hammett, The Thin Man and Lillian Hellman's "Turtle" from her book Pentimento
Margaret Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale
The Orestia
"Oedipus" and "Antigone"
C. S. Lewis, Till we have Faces

Humanity -
Daniel Keyes, Flowers for Algernon and its film version "Charley"

Data on "Star Trek: New Generation" and Isaac Asimov's The Naked Sun and/or The Caves of Steel

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ENGLISH 293 "Literature: A Minority View"

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Fences, by August Wilson.

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Invisible Man, by Ralph Ellison

Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'fore I Die, by Maya Angelou (poetry)

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, by August Wilson (play)

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Native Sons: A Critical Study of Twentieth-Century Negro American Authors, Ed. by E. Margolies (Contains essays about Black authors up to 1968).

Raisin in the Sun, by Lorraine Hansberry (play)

Soul on Ice, by Eldridge Cleaver (collection of revolutionary essays)

Stride Toward Freedom, by Martin Luther King (non-fiction)

Tar Baby, by Toni Morrison. (novel)

TCLC Series (Twentieth Century Literary Criticism).

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The Color Purple, by Alice Walker.

The Harlem Renaissance Remembered, Ed. Arna Bontemps. Especially interesting is the essay, "The Awakening" by Arna Bontemps, in addition to essays about Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, Claude McCay, Zora Neale Hurston, and Langston Hughes.

Their Eyes Were Watching God, by Zora Neale Hurston.

The Negro Novel in America, by Robert Bone. A very thorough historical perspective. Excellent sections about Richard Wright's Native Son, Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man, and James Baldwin's literary contributions.

Twentieth Century American Literature Series.

HISPANIC CULTURE COURSE

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